Effects of acupuncture, applied relaxation, estrogens and placebo on hot flushes in postmenopausal women: an analysis of two prospective, parallel, randomized studies.

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OBJECTIVE: To assess if transdermal or oral estrogens, acupuncture and applied relaxation decrease the number of menopausal hot flushes/24 h and improve climacteric symptoms, as assessed by the Kupperman index, more than transdermal placebo treatment. SETTING: An outpatient clinic at a Swedish university hospital. METHODS: A total of 102 postmenopausal women were recruited to two studies performed in parallel. In Study I, the women were randomized between transdermal placebo or estrogen treatment and, in Study II, between oral estrogens, acupuncture or applied relaxation for 12 weeks. Climacteric symptoms were measured with daily logbooks on hot flushes. Women completed the assessment questionnaire for the Kupperman index at baseline and after 12 weeks. RESULTS: The number of flushes/24 h decreased significantly after 4 and 12 weeks in all groups except the placebo group. Both at 4 and 12 weeks, acupuncture decreased the number of flushes more ($p<0.05$; $p<0.01$, respectively) than placebo. At 12 weeks, applied relaxation decreased the number of flushes more ($p<0.05$) than placebo. The Kupperman index score decreased in all groups except the placebo group. The decrease in score was significantly greater in all treatment groups than in the placebo group ($p<0.01$). CONCLUSION: Acupuncture and applied relaxation both reduced the number of hot flushes significantly better than placebo and should be further evaluated as alternatives to hormone therapy in women with menopausal vasomotor complaints.
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